GENERAL REEVALUATION REPORT

BEL MARIN KEYS UNIT V EXPANSION OF THE HAMILTON WETLAND RESTORATION PROJECT NOVATO, CALIFORNIA

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this General Reevaluation Report (GRR) is to perform feasibility-level analysis to evaluate potential Federal interest in reauthorizing the Hamilton Army Airfield Wetland Restoration Project (HWRP, authorized in WRDA 1999) to expand habitat restoration by including Bel Marin Keys V (BMKV), located along San Pablo Bay in Marin County, California. This report summarizes the reevaluation study process and results of the study effort. The alternative formulation and evaluation process builds on the alternative formulation previously conducted for the HWRP. Project feasibility is assessed in terms of physical, environmental, and economic considerations. This report also reevaluates the previously authorized HWRP, addressing implementation costs that have been adjusted and updated since project authorization.

The 1998 Feasibility Study for HWRP extended over a study area of 988 acres along San Pablo Bay, including the Hamilton Army Airfield property (HAAF) and the State Lands Commission property (SLC). The addition of BMKV would add 1,610 acres along San Pablo Bay and 2 acres to the west of HAAF, for a total area of 2,600 acres. Federal interest requires that a proposed project be in accordance with U.S. Water Resources Council's Principles and Guidelines (P&G), comply with applicable environmental laws and statutes, and have the support of a non-Federal sponsor who is willing and able to participate in the cost-sharing requirements for project implementation. The non-Federal sponsor for the Hamilton Wetlands Restoration Project is the California State Coastal Conservancy (SCC). The SCC is also the sponsor for this GRR, and would sponsor the expanded HWRP if Congress authorizes the proposed addition of BMKV. The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) is also participating in this GRR in an advisory capacity.

1.2 PROJECT AUTHORITY

The 1998 Hamilton Wetlands Restoration Project Feasibility Study was authorized by a resolution adopted by the United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, dated October 29, 1997, that requested the Secretary of the Army to review the report of the Chief of Engineers on San Francisco Bay and Tributaries, California, dated December 21, 1976, and any other pertinent reports, with a view to determining whether any modification of the recommendations contained therein were advisable at that time, in the interest of ecosystem protection and restoration, including restoring tidal and

seasonal wetlands and related purposes, at the Hamilton Army Airfield and adjacent properties on San Pablo Bay, Marin County, California.

The Hamilton Wetlands Restoration Project was authorized in Section 101(b) of WRDA 1999, which specifies:

"(b) PROJECTS SUBJECT TO A FINAL REPORT. The following projects for water resources development and conservation and other purposes are authorized to be carried out by the Secretary substantially in accordance with the plans, and subject to the conditions, recommended in a final report of the Chief of Engineers if a favorable report of the Chief is completed not later than December 31, 1999: . . . (3) Hamilton Airfield, California – The project for environmental restoration, Hamilton Airfield, California, at a total cost of 55,200,000, with an estimated Federal cost of $41,400,000 and an estimated non-Federal cost of $13,800,000."

1.3 PLANNING PROCESS

The Corps of Engineers planning process consists of six steps; these are set forth in the P&G and are repeated throughout a study as new and more detailed information is developed. The six planning steps are (1) specify problems and opportunities, (2) inventory and forecast conditions, (3) formulate alternative plans, (4) evaluate effects of alternative plans, (5) compare alternative plans, and (6) select a recommended plan. The results of this process, presented in the Hamilton Wetland Restoration Plan and this GRR, were developed jointly with the SCC and BCDC. Coordination with other agencies was performed throughout this study to ensure that problems, concerns, and opportunities that could be addressed through water and related land resources planning received the broadest possible attention. The Corps, SCC and BCDC team members have coordinated closely with city and county governments, as well as representatives of the Bel Marin Keys residential community. The Hamilton Restoration Group (HRG) met regularly to identify and resolve issues related to wetland restoration at Hamilton Field. Meetings with the HRG and the BMKV stakeholders group have continued during this phase of the study. Input from the HRG was solicited by the SCC's consultant team and was incorporated into the design for both HWRP and BMKV. The team completed the *Draft Hamilton Wetlands Conceptual Restoration Plan* in April of 1998, and the *Draft Bel Marin Keys Conceptual Restoration Design Technical Report* in March 2002.

1.4 PRIOR STUDIES AND REPORTS

There have been numerous prior studies and reports related to this project. Those most relevant are listed below. Additional prior studies and reports relevant specifically to the environmental evaluation are listed in the 1998 *Hamilton Wetland Restoration Plan Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR).* A supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (SEIS/R) was completed for the proposed expansion of the HWRP. Additional references can be found in this document.

a. *Section 204 Initial Appraisal for the Bel Marin Keys Unit 5 Wetland Restoration Project.* San Francisco District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, San Francisco, CA. September 2000. This document was prepared in accordance with the Water Resources Development Act of 1992, and was submitted to the Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Initial Appraisal report documented the preliminary engineering and economic review of the addition of BMKV, and concluded that adding BMKV would represent a cost-effective, feasible extension to the Hamilton project.

b. *Hamilton Wetland Restoration Plan, Volume I: Feasibility Report and Volume II: Final EIS/EIR.* December 1998. California State Coastal Conservancy and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, San Francisco District. The Feasibility Report for the Hamilton Wetland Restoration Project Volume describes the plan formulation process for the project, presents the incremental analysis of the project alternatives, and recommends a restoration plan. The study concluded that there is a federal interest in the project, based on both the ecological benefits of habitat restoration, and the ecological benefits of beneficial reuse of dredged sediment. Portions of Volume I are excerpted for reference in this GRR. Volume II analyzes the potential environmental effects of restoring the Hamilton Army Airfield and adjacent properties to tidal marsh. The EIS/R concluded that with implementation of mitigation, all potential impacts would be less than significant.

c. *Final Environmental Impact Statement Hamilton Army Airfield Disposal and Reuse Vol. 1 and Vol. 2.* February 1996. Sacramento District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento, CA. Technical assistance from Jones & Stokes Associates, Inc. The potential environmental effects of reuse including the effects of the proposed disposal action are described in Volume One of this report. A description of the affected environment, environmental consequences and mitigation measures are provided for thirteen resources. The abstract provided in the beginning of the document states that the disposal action would result in the loss of federally protected wildlife and sensitive plant communities, historic structures, and risk of flooding from reduced maintenance of flood protection facilities. The abstract also states that reuse could result in a range of impacts including loss of wetlands and destruction of cultural resources. Section 4. 11 of this report provides an overview of the biological resources at HWRP. Table E-1 and E-2 are lists of plants and wildlife observed at HWRP. Volume 2 includes Responses to Comments.

d. A Section 204 *Initial Appraisal of the Hamilton Army Airfield Wetland Restoration Project,* prepared in accordance with the Water Resources Development Act of 1992, was submitted to the Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in December 1997. The appraisal, which contained the information necessary to enter into Project Study Plan (PSP) negotiations for a cost-shared feasibility study, was submitted with the recommendation that it be considered as an Expedited Reconnaissance Study 905(b)(WRDA 1996) Preliminary Analysis. In that same month, USACE Headquarters approved the appraisal as the reconnaissance level document providing the basis for proceeding into the feasibility phase of planning under the General Investigations

program. The reconnaissance phase resulted in the execution of a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement (FCSA) on April 8, 1998.

e. Draft document, *Hamilton Wetlands Conceptual Restoration Plan,* April 1998. Woodward Clyde, Inc,. in collaboration with H.T. Harvey and Associates, Eric Polson, Philip Williams and Associates, Ltd., SCC, the City of Novato and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). This document presents the physical and biological design for the tidal marsh recommended for the Hamilton Wetlands Restoration Plan.

f. *The Long Term Management Strategy for Bay Area Dredged Material Final Programmatic EIS/EIR* was published in October 1998. It was a joint effort by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (SFBRWQCB), BCDC and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). These agencies joined together with navigation interests, fishing groups, environmental organizations, and the public in a cooperative effort to establish a comprehensive Long-Term Management Strategy (LTMS) for Bay Area dredged material. Three alternative long-term approaches were evaluated in this EIS/EIR. Each of these alternatives includes a more balanced distribution of dredged material disposal in a combination of all three of the potential placement environments: at existing sites within the Estuary, offshore in the Pacific ocean, and at a variety of upland or wetland disposal or reuse sites. The LTMS goal is to conduct necessary dredging and dredged material disposal in an environmentally sound and economically prudent manner, to maximize the beneficial reuse of dredged material and to develop a coordinated permit review process for dredging projects. The HWRP was evaluated as part of a comprehensive review by the LTMS agencies of potential sites for reuse and was found to be a very suitable site for wetland restoration using dredged material.

g. *Conceptual Design for Tidal Wetland Restoration for the Hamilton Army Airfield.* Philip Williams and Associates, 1998.

1.5 REPORT ORGANIZATION

The six planning steps presented in the U.S. Water Resources Council's Principles and Guidelines form the basis of organization for this feasibility-level GRR. Chapter 2, Problem Identification, provides a description of the study area and describes the problems, opportunities and constraints associated with the addition of Bel Marin Keys Unit V to the Hamilton Wetland Restoration Project. In Chapter 3, Plan Formulation, the objectives are developed and, to address the identified problems and opportunities, alternative plans are formulated. Chapter 4 evaluates and compares the alternative plans and Chapter 5 presents the selected plan. A summary of the post-authorization changes is presented in Chapter 6. Coordination and public involvement are discussed in Chapter 7 and the study conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter 8.